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Chairman: Mr. Wolfe ..... (Jamaica)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 62: Social development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/62/71-E/2007/46, A/62/122 and A/62/168)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/62/61-E/2007/7, A/62/61/Add.1-E/2007/7/Add.1, A/62/132 and Add.1, A/62/154, A/62/157, A/62/357 and A/C.3/62/L.4)

(c) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*) (A/62/131 and Corr.1)

1. **Ms. Atanassova** (Bulgaria), speaking as the Bulgarian youth delegate to the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, said that the accession of Bulgaria to the European Union had opened up many possibilities for mobility, education and job opportunities to her country's youth. One of the most pressing issues facing the international community was how to guarantee the effective participation of youth in the global economy. Unfortunately, a decade after the adoption of the World Programme of Action on Youth, its goals had not been met.

2. Unemployment had become one of the biggest challenges for global youth, and she called on Member States to put an end to the escalating juvenilization and feminization of poverty as a matter of utmost priority. Both the public and private sectors should provide opportunities for self-employment, vocational training, poverty reduction and job creation. An alternative way to fight joblessness was to promote social entrepreneurship through training and microcredit. The costs of microfinance were small compared to their impact on empowerment and escape from poverty and marginalization.

3. Although progress had been made in the area of literacy, primary education was still not universal. In the current knowledge-based economy, even secondary education was no longer a guarantee of entry into the labour market. Therefore, young people must have opportunities for higher education and to acquire skills through non-formal and on-the-job training. The gap between available skills and labour market demands could be bridged by involving employers in adjusting the educational curriculum to the needs of the market.

4. Besides being a driving force in poverty reduction and modernization of education, youth should also be recognized as a reliable and committed partner in achieving international development strategies such as the Millennium Development Goals. As the international community moved into the implementation stages of its development agenda, youth must be mobilized to become not only beneficiaries but contributors.

5. Therefore, she strongly supported youth consultation mechanisms and called on all Governments to include youth representatives in their delegations to the United Nations. She commended the establishment of the United Nations Youth Fund in 1981 and urged Member States to allocate funding for its activities on a regular and predictable basis. Businesses that were members of the Global Compact should support the empowerment of youth delegates and facilitate other forms of youth participation as well.

6. **Ms. Romulus** (Haiti) said that her delegation endorsed the view that a society could be judged by the way it treated its elderly and disabled members and that promoting the family as the basic unit of society was a way to ensure the future of humanity.

7. It was a paradox that, in countries which had not reached a highly advanced stage of development, the care of the elderly did not seem to pose a problem, yet a development process that resulted in greater economic disparity often led the elderly to be viewed as a burden to society, even by their families. In Haiti, the economic liberalization begun in the 1980s had seriously damaged the country's socio-economic structures, which had worsened the already precarious situation of its elderly citizens. Since the adoption of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, various institutional mechanisms for policy development had been established. Haiti would welcome technical and material assistance from the international community in the elaboration of laws and strategies specifically directed at the needs of the elderly. Like other developing countries, its population was young, but it was not rare to see the aged left unprotected because their children and even their grandchildren had died before them.

8. The Haitian Government was paying increasing attention to the issue of disabled persons, and their integration into society was one of its priorities. Accordingly, it had recently established a Government department for the integration of the disabled, and disability issues had been made a priority in the 2007-2008 budget. The most recent statistics showed that about 800,000 Haitians were affected by a disability. The problem lay not in the handicap itself, but in the discrimination it caused.

9. Haiti, like many other developing countries, had seen an increase in the number of single-parent families and a disturbing rise in the number of abandoned children. Global cooperation was needed to overcome the problems created by the weakening of the family structure.

10. **Mr. Bhattarai** (Nepal) said that despite the commitments made in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, important goals on poverty eradication, full employment and social integration were far from being met. His delegation emphasized a rights-based approach to development as the best way to address social development issues. Nepal's interim constitution of 2007 had incorporated that approach, and even with its limited resources and capacity, Nepal would continue its efforts in that direction. Full employment and decent working conditions would be achievable in the developing countries when the developed countries were more accommodating towards migrant workers. Globalization had further marginalized the least developed and landlocked developing countries, and its negative impact should be addressed in the context of social development as well. Land-locked developing countries must receive special consideration in coping with their particular vulnerability.

11. Poverty, limited infrastructure, a growing population and inadequate resources and capacity were some of the challenges to Nepal's social development. Its interim plan 2007-2010 was intended to address pervasive inequality, inequity, discrimination and social injustice. It had formed the High-level Senior Citizens Coordination Committee to address the issue of ageing, and was also focusing attention on the empowerment of youth for their effective participation in national restructuring and socio-economic transformation.

12. The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was a significant step towards ensuring their rights worldwide. Nepal's interim constitution provided for special treatment and protection for the disabled, and national policies and an action plan were being implemented. The Civil Service Act had recently been amended to allow positive discrimination for disabled persons in Government employment.

13. In the past year, Nepal had witnessed unprecedented political transformation, generating new hopes and aspirations among its people. As a country emerging from conflict, it was confident that it could improve living conditions through the implementation of massive social development programmes. It hoped to continue to receive support from the international community in its endeavours.

14. **Ms. Poymanova** (Russian Federation) said that her delegation welcomed the activities of the Commission for Social Development and the outcome of its forty-fifth session, as an effective mechanism for coordination of international cooperation in the areas of youth, ageing and the family and the rights of disabled persons. It provided a unique forum for constructive dialogue among all groups of States on key social development issues. Her delegation also welcomed the outcome of the fourth session of the working group to draft an optional protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and hoped that its work could go forward without politicization, taking into account the views of the widest possible group of States parties.

15. Effective social policy was one of the foundations of economic recovery in the Russian Federation, and had led to falling unemployment rates and an improvement in the standard of living. Further innovative economic measures on the agenda were designed to promote investment and growth. As youth currently represented over 27 per cent of the population, the country's social and economic development required an effective policy and strategy to integrate youth as full members of the economy and society, which were being implemented through the recently established State Youth Committee. The Madrid Plan of Action adopted at the Second World Assembly on Ageing was also seen as a framework for the Russian Federation's actions in favour of the elderly.

16. One of the most important events to take place in 2007 was the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was under consideration for signature by her Government. A plan of action for 2006-2010 in support of persons with disabilities had been launched.

17. In closing, she noted that the Russian Federation supported the consolidation of United Nations activities in the areas of social development, security and human rights, which would be the basis for United Nations reform in the social and economic spheres.

18. **Ms. Medal** (Nicaragua) said that social development was a subject of great interest to countries like Nicaragua, given its vulnerability and the challenges it faced in combating poverty and unemployment. Globalization and the capitalist system had not been the best allies of countries like hers. After 16 years of applying the economic policies imposed by the international financial institutions, the country was in chaos, with a large percentage of the population living on less than a dollar a day. Although it had been recognized at the World Summit for Social Development that productive employment was a basic element of development and an effective means of combating poverty, little progress had been made. The economic, social and cultural rights of Nicaraguans, like those of many in developing countries, had been sacrificed for the benefit of a few, as a result of globalization and free markets.

19. Nevertheless, Nicaragua had begun a new stage in its history. The Government of Reconciliation and National Unity was seeking social development, poverty reduction, job creation for all and the elimination of inequalities. The universal right to free education had been established, and major progress had been achieved in eradicating illiteracy. Access to free health care and medicines had also been guaranteed. Microcredit programmes offered support to small and medium-sized businesses, and also to graduates who had been unable to find jobs, to encourage entrepreneurship. Gender equity was another important element, and the new Government had set a target of 50 per cent women in key posts in Government and public institutions. The "Zero Hunger" programme provided food aid combined with technical assistance aimed at making families self-sufficient in meeting their food needs.

20. Those efforts required mobilization of national and international resources through South-South cooperation and regional integration. However, the industrialized countries should also face their responsibilities in that area, not only as donors of assistance but as development partners. Nicaragua had recently signed a three-year agreement with the International Monetary Fund, and had established development indicators that went beyond the targets set in the Millennium Development Goals.

21. All countries, rich or poor, aspired to social development, in order to ensure international peace and security, eliminate migratory flows and overcome inequality. Developing countries sought fair trade, where companies made investments not just because they would find cheap labour and raw materials, but assumed their share of social responsibility by investing in education, training, health and decent housing for their workers.

22. Her Government was concerned at the high rate of migration by its citizens in search of better job opportunities, and believed that the best way to stem migration to developed countries was to create good jobs within its own borders. That could happen only when the developed countries met their commitment of 0.7 per cent of GDP for official development assistance, established in the Monterrey Consensus. While poverty remained in Africa and while hunger, unemployment, and infant mortality persisted in Latin America and the Caribbean, migration to the North would continue. Her delegation called on receiving countries to treat the men and women who left their homes in search of a better life for themselves and their families with dignity and full respect for their human rights.

23. The peoples of the world must become aware that poverty was the greatest enemy of humanity. Without education, health and adequate food, there could be no development, and without development, there could be no peace.

24. **Mr. Wali** (Nigeria) reiterated Nigeria's commitment to the implementation of the relevant initiatives and frameworks on social development. His country had established a new Ministry for Women's Affairs and Social Development, which was responsible for social development initiatives relating to the family, youth, disabled persons, older persons and other vulnerable groups in Nigeria. Other

achievements made by the Government towards implementing the outcome of the World Summit included strengthening of its national poverty eradication programmes. The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy I (NEEDS I) was aimed at reducing poverty through economic growth and employment generation. NEEDS II was designed to address challenges and issues not covered by NEEDS I, particularly social development, gender issues, science and technology and the family. Further, the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) had been established to partner with stakeholders to provide loans for poor urban and rural communities.

25. Nigeria was committed to good governance, including a zero tolerance anti-corruption policy, the rule of law and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, to which it had contributed large sums of money. Nigeria also believed in a decent work agenda. It had taken measures to create a favourable work environment for labourers and had recently approved a National Workplace Policy on HIV/AIDS.

26. Other social development activities to be implemented by the Federal Ministry for Women's Affairs and Social Development included a programme for the integration of destitute persons in Nigeria, a multisectoral approach to poverty alleviation, rights to affordable education, family health, environmental sustainability, rights of protection of the family and ensuring peace and security. He reaffirmed Nigeria's commitment to General Assembly resolution 61/142, which called for mainstreaming ageing issues into poverty eradication strategies and national development plans, and to implementing the Political Declaration and the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing.

27. With regard to the need for wealth creation, Nigeria had mapped out a comprehensive master plan for a holistic development of the region. He reiterated his Government's call for genuine foreign investment in the energy, power, and other infrastructural sectors of the Nigerian economy. The partnership of civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector was needed to generate employment and address adequately the challenge of social development.

28. Nigeria recognized that the implementation of the Copenhagen Commitments and the attainment of the MDGs were mutually reinforcing and that the international community needed to assist national Governments in capacity building in order to implement those instruments. He urged developed countries that had not done so to make concrete efforts towards meeting the target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product for official development assistance to developing countries, in accordance with their commitments.

29. **Mr. Hermoso** (Philippines) said that his Government had taken a bold step in engaging youth in the policymaking process by appointing young people to head the Office of the President's National Youth Commission. The participation of the Philippines Commissioner for Youth in the sixty-second session of the General Assembly was proof of his country's commitment to the United Nations World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY).

30. The National Youth Commission also championed the cause of Filipino youth through the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) or youth council, where youth under the age of 24 sat as policymakers. His Government was working on reforming the SK model, and the upcoming local elections for the SKs offered an opportunity to guide the young Government leaders towards more responsive, MDG-inspired programmes and Government platforms. According to the Philippine Local Government Code, the youth councils were mandated to receive 10 per cent of the internal revenue allotment of its locality, in order to help them devise sustainable programmes and initiatives to assist the Government in achieving the MDGs.

31. The Philippine Government expressed its commitment to improving the lives of persons with disabilities, protecting their human rights and empowering them to become active participants in society. The Philippines had signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and it welcomed Member States' participation in that important instrument.

32. It was unfortunate but widely recognized that most persons with disabilities were among the poorest of the poor. One way of empowering them was to ensure that they benefited from States' economic progress. Cooperation among all nations in the development field would help improve States' ability to address the issues faced by persons with disabilities. His delegation stressed the need for the MDGs to be more disability inclusive.

33. **Ms. Al-Mansouri** (United Arab Emirates) said that more than half the world population still lacked the basic requirements for living with dignity, and that poverty, disease, unemployment, illiteracy, organized crime and armed conflict still presented major challenges to creating a humane society in which peoples enjoyed security, stability and prosperity. She commended United Nations efforts in the field of social development and urged the redoubling of international efforts to implement the outcomes of all the conferences on social development.

34. The United Arab Emirates continued to fulfil its commitments relating to social development and improved standard of living for human beings at the national and global levels by providing necessary financial and human resources and contributing to the global partnership to create a humane society. A recent instance of her Government's commitment at the global level was the launch of the Dubai Cares campaign, which in its initial phase aimed to provide primary education for over 1 million children throughout the world, particularly in Asia and Africa, education being the main factor in poverty eradication. At the local level, her country had launched the United Arab Emirates Government Strategy, its first mandatory programme for Government performance. The programme focused on ensuring country-wide sustainable development and high quality of life for the population, in accordance with United Nations efforts to promote human development. To achieve the above-mentioned goals, her Government provided free education at all levels of schooling, including higher education, universities, colleges and technical institutes, in order to prepare young men and women for work to meet the demands of national development plans.

35. The United Arab Emirates had worked to raise health services to an international standard, and had succeeded in lowering infant and postpartum mortality, eliminating polio and malaria, and limiting the spread of HIV/AIDS, with no new cases reported since the discovery of the disease. The Government had also achieved progress in most social development indexes, such as growth in per capita income and increase in Government expenditure on education, health, social services and social security programmes. Enrolment rates in elementary schools had risen and illiteracy rates had declined. Women's participation in the workforce and the decision-making process was on the rise, and in the previous two years, two women had been appointed as Government ministers.

36. Her Government had recently issued laws to protect the human rights of nationals and residents in the country, relating in particular to children, human trafficking and working hours and conditions for labourers and domestic helpers. The Government had also put in place mechanisms to follow up the implementation of those laws. It had established special centres to assist, treat, and train juveniles, troubled youth and persons with special needs.

37. **Mr. Anzola Quinto** (Venezuela) said that one of the central premises of the Bolivarian revolution was the establishment of a new development model focused on the human individual. His Government had made poverty eradication the linchpin of its social development policy and of its national development strategy. For that reason, Venezuela was firmly committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Aware of the importance of promoting full employment and decent work for all as they related to poverty eradication, his Government approached the issue from the standpoint of endogenous development, based on solidarity and human dignity, in the context of twenty-first-century socialism.

38. Eradication of poverty in Venezuela was being achieved through programmes known as social missions, aimed at progressively integrating marginalized social classes into society, through an equitable distribution of income and wealth.

39. His Government echoed the call voiced by the Secretary-General in his report (A/62/122) on the importance of creation of youth employment in poverty eradication. More than 64 per cent of young Venezuelans were part of the workforce.

40. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had recognized Venezuela as an illiteracy-free territory in October 2005. The Government guaranteed the Venezuelan people access to health care through the social missions in the health sector. Social investment was on the rise, and unemployment rates had fallen. Given the fundamental role of microcredit in poverty eradication, the Government enacted legislation, such as the Microcredit Law, to guarantee access to credit for the individuals in greatest need, and provided incentives to small and medium-sized enterprises.

41. The social missions were also the means by which the Government incorporated older persons into its social policy, using the concept of active ageing, which was based on the elements of health, participation and security. That approach sought to improve the social conditions and quality of life of older persons, a traditionally excluded group, and to involve them in the design of policies implemented on their behalf. Initiatives such as the "comprehensive villages" provided comprehensive care to persons over 60 living in a situation of economic insolvency.

42. The Law on Persons with Disabilities had recently entered into force. Its aim was to guarantee the full development and autonomy of persons with disabilities and to integrate them into family and community life.

43. His delegation wished to note that its national information for the Secretary-General's report, "Follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond" (A/62/132) had been submitted to the Secretariat in a timely manner and that for reasons beyond its control had been included in document A/62/132/Add.1.

44. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela believed the family to be the natural unit of society and ensured its full and comprehensive protection. The Government pursued social policies for the protection of the family through the social missions, of which mention should be made of the food mission, which benefited more than 11 million people.

45. The Government declared its commitment to work with the other nations of the region in building just and equitable societies based on democracy and solidarity. To that end his country promoted regional cooperation initiatives, such as the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas, that were based on the principles of solidarity and complementarity.

46. **Mr. Belinga-Eboutou** (Cameroon) said that poverty eradication was a priority for Cameroon. At the national level, the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative had impacted positively on education, agriculture, infrastructure and action to combat HIV/AIDS. Youth employment-generating initiatives had been organized throughout the country and a national policy on ageing was being elaborated in implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action. Legislation had also been enacted to guarantee special rights for disabled persons as well as their equal access to health care, education, training and employment, and a national committee had been established to facilitate their socio-economic rehabilitation. Early results were encouraging, thanks to the support of Cameroon's partners in development.

47. Poverty continued to be a serious threat to world peace. The human person should be at the focus of the Organization's activities, and the international community should honour its commitments towards least developed countries in the area of official development assistance, investment and debt relief. His delegation welcomed the prioritization of social development issues over the past decade by the United Nations and Bretton Woods institutions. The Millennium Village Initiative, inter alia, showed that dramatic results could be achieved in a short period of time.

48. **Ms. Kayun** (Ukraine) said that the advancement of a socially oriented economy in the Ukraine and the enhancement of social policy based on the efficient use of existing resources had been strengthened through recent legislative initiatives. Productive work and full and adequately remunerated employment, especially youth employment, was a key to combating poverty and promoting social integration, and her Government was committed to furthering the outcomes of the forty-fifth session of the Commission for Social Development at the national and international levels. While the primary responsibility for social development policies lay with Governments, partnerships with international organizations and civil society had an important supportive role to play. Her delegation was eager to contribute towards the creation of a more competitive and dynamic economy that furthered sustainable development as well as social cohesion.

49. **Mr. Jeenbaev** (Kyrgyzstan) said that the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals provided a basis for promoting social development at the national and international levels as well as an international consensus for poverty eradication and the creation of stable and peaceful societies. Regional development strategies were informed by those Goals, including in Central Asia. The National Development Strategy for 2007-2010 demonstrated the commitment of the Kyrgyz Republic to those goals; it focused on improving living standards and social well-being, including in cooperation with regional and

international mechanisms. A welfare state was being created based on a dialogue between national and local government and civil society. The same principles were being applied to foreign policy on social issues with a view to increasing the number of stakeholders for new forms of social partnership to promote social equality between States. The political will existed between States; what was needed was to strengthen mechanisms for monitoring joint action on the Goals.

50. **Mr. Omar** (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was of direct relevance to the work of FAO, especially in ensuring right of access to food and nutrition, education, health care and decent employment. A number of the provisions of the instrument were directly linked to FAO's mandate. Rural pilot projects undertaken by FAO in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and Thailand with the support of national Governments and national and international NGOs had demonstrated that persons with disabilities were capable of successfully applying new techniques for income generation and improved livelihoods.

51. Emergency situations only increased the vulnerability of such persons to discrimination, poverty and food insecurity and created new disabilities due to the destruction of livelihoods, malnutrition, food-related diseases, trauma and unsafe conditions. FAO had thus updated its emergency and rehabilitation operations to better serve the needs of persons with disabilities and their families and to ensure their full integration in post-emergency rehabilitation programmes.

52. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Israel should consider its responsibilities as an occupying Power towards the occupied civilian population whose social well-being, development, economic conditions, family life and circumstances had been directly and severely impacted over the past 40 years by unlawful policies and measures that affected children, women, elderly and disabled persons alike. Ninety per cent of Palestinians in Gaza lived below the poverty line, with an overwhelming majority dependent on food aid. Livelihoods and employment opportunities were being destroyed on a daily basis, with thousands of families left without a source of income. Contrary to the principles it claimed to espouse, Israel was deepening abject poverty among Palestinians and increasing their dependency on the welfare system, including through its construction of the wall, its imposition of a racist and debilitating permit regime, expansion of settlements, imposition of closures and severe restrictions on the movement of persons and goods throughout the occupied territories. All such measures were in grave contravention of Israel's international obligations. Far from promoting social development, Israel's unlawful policies and practices against the Palestinian people had devastated their socio-economic conditions and were destroying the very fabric of Palestinian society. Promoting national development and progress while destroying another people's development and future could hardly be construed as a contribution to international cooperation for sustainable development.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.